



Summary Report	Near Fatality	2/25/16
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1. Near Fatality Victim: 1-year-old male

2. Was the child residing in the child's home or in an out-of-home placement at the time of the near fatality?

The child was residing in his home when the following incident occurred:

On July 13, 2015, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding a one-year-old male child who had been brought to the hospital after being found unconscious and unresponsive at home. Tests revealed bilateral chronic head bleeds and retinal hemorrhaging. It was determined that the injuries were caused by non-accidental trauma. The Department determined that the child's stepfather, Paul Mendoza, and the child's mother, Brittany Pfister, physically abused the child or permitted another person to physically abuse him.

3. If the victim in the Preliminary Report involved a child residing in the child's home, the following information will be provided:

a. Services being provided to the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the abuse or neglect at the time of the incident and the date of the last contact before the incident between the entity providing services and the person receiving services:

Although no services were being provided prior to the July 13, 2015 near fatality incident, the family did have an open case from a report dated December 12, 2014. The investigation assessed the children as safe and the allegations were unsubstantiated. However, the case remained open pending the completion of all required documentation. The last date of contact between the Department and the family was on December 16, 2014.

b. Was the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the abuse or neglect the subject of a report for investigation at the time of the incident?

Brittany Pfister, the child, the child's father, and an unidentified perpetrator were the subjects of the December 12, 2014 report.

c. All involvement of the child's parents and of the person suspected of the abuse or neglect in a situation for which a report for investigation was made or in services provided pursuant to this chapter in the five years preceding the incident:

The child's step-father, Paul Mendoza, was involved in the following:

On May 25, 2012, a report was received alleging physical abuse to a child who had been in the care of an unknown perpetrator, later identified to be Paul Mendoza. The allegation was unsubstantiated as to the unknown perpetrator.

The child's father and his mother, Brittany Pfister, were involved in the following:

On December 12, 2014, a report was received alleging physical abuse to the near fatality victim by Brittany Pfister, the child's father, and/or an unidentified perpetrator. The child had been found to have a healing rib fracture during a hospitalization for whooping cough. An investigation was initiated and the child was forensically examined. Although physicians



indicated the injury was suspicious, explanations provided by the family and the possibility that the injury was caused by the whooping cough could not be ruled out. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case remained open pending the completion of all required documentation.

d. Any investigation pursuant to a report for investigation concerning the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the abuse or neglect or services provided to the child or the child's family since the date of the incident involving the near fatality:

The investigation of the near fatality report resulted in the removal of the child and a sibling from the home. The Department determined that the child's stepfather, Paul Mendoza, and the child's mother, Brittany Pfister, physically abused the child or permitted another person to physically abuse him. The allegations pertaining to each of them have been substantiated. The Department placed the child and a sibling with the other parent and filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Juvenile Court. Services are being provided.

A subsequent report was received on January 7, 2016 alleging neglect to the child and sibling by their mother, Brittany Pfister. The investigation is ongoing, and the Department observed the children to be safe with the other parent on January 11, 2016.

4. If the victim in the Preliminary Report involved a child residing in an out-of-home placement, the following information will be provided:

a. Licensing Agency:

N/A

b. Licensing history of the out-of-home placement, including the type of license held by the operator of the placement and the period for which the placement has been licensed:

N/A

c. Summary of all violations by the licensee:

N/A

d. Any other actions by the licensee or an employee of the licensee that constitute a substantial failure to protect and promote the health, safety and welfare of a child.

N/A

5. Actions taken by the Department in response to the case including any changes to policy or practice and/or recommendations for further changes in policies, practices, rules or statutes:

The Department conducted a joint investigation with the Tucson Police Department. The Department determined that the child's stepfather, Paul Mendoza, and the child's mother, Brittany Pfister, physically abused the child or permitted another person to physically abuse him. The allegations pertaining to each of them have been substantiated. Both the child and a sibling were placed in the care of the other parent and the Department filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Juvenile Court. The Department is providing services to the family.

Additionally, in accordance with the DCS Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16), multidisciplinary team (MDT) reviews of fatality and near fatality cases were implemented during



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the first quarter of FY16. The MDT reviews of fatality and near fatality cases, especially those with prior DCS involvement, are a key feature of the Strategic Plan and support the objective of increasing the accuracy of safety and risk assessments in investigations.

This case was reviewed by the MDT in order to identify any systemic factors, both internal and external to the Department that may have had an impact. The Department is using the aggregate data gathered through all of the MDT reviews to assess and guide future changes and/or recommendations to policies, practices, rules or statutes. Findings from these reviews will be compiled into an annual report to be shared on the DCS website. The target date for release of this report is September 1, 2016.

For more information regarding the Department of Child Safety's Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2016, please visit the DCS website at: <https://dcs.az.gov/news/dcs-strategic-plan>.